07 20220518 Philippians 2:12-30

Light Bearers

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

14 Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

17 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

Timothy Commended

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. 23 Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.

Epaphroditus Praised

25 Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; 26 since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness,

and hold such men in esteem; [30] because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

Paul starts by exhorting the believers there to press on, to not give up, to keep on keeping on. He tells them that they've done the right thing whether he was in their presence or not. They are people of character! I've heard it said that "our character is defined by what we do when we think no one is looking." Paul says they, ve done it right, so keep on doing it.

Then he says the curious words to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling". When you got saved, you became a new creation in Christ, but you have a choice each day as to whether you're going to "live that out" or not. I am the father of my children, but how I choose to interact with my children determines whether I'm living that out or not. This is not a verse about getting saved or having to do with salvation. We already know that we can't work for our salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The Greek for "fear and trembling" means to work it with respect for God and with a sense of who you are and who you are not. You are not God. He is God. As I've often said, "It's a relief when you realize that you are not God." When we choose to understand who He is and who we are not, we can begin to "work it out", and the cool thing is that when we step aside, it is HE who does the working in us for His pleasure.

It is important to understand that this is not telling us to "work for our salvation". Some improperly use this to create fear in people as a caution of losing their salvation. That is not at all what this is about. That will create anxiety, nervousness, and fear. There is also a teaching that since you are righteous before God, you need not concern yourself with the flesh. That also causes anxiety and fear. This is because whether you're aware of it or not, you will always have your flesh-self within you until you are completely sanctified. Teaching that says you are perfect and righteous in Christ so stop being concerned about righteous living also creates anxiety, heart-ache, and fear. It does so because you ARE going to have times of fighting your own flesh and you WILL sin. This teaching causes misinformed believers to wonder, "What is wrong with me. I still do things I

don't want to do." Paul talked about ALL of that in Romans chapter 7. Paul uses this same "fear and trembling" statement over in 2 Cor 7:15 where he is talking about Titus who was encouraged by the Corinthians' reception of him with "fear and trembling".

"Working out" is what you do when you have a garden and you weed eat, water it, and feed it. You are pursuing fruit from that garden. We do that when we ACTIVELY PURSUE OBEDIENCE IN THE PROCESS OF SANCTIFICATION. Paul is talking about this process in many of the verses in Philippians. In Chapter three Paul will describe himself as "straining" and "pressing on" toward the goal of Christlikeness (Philippians 3:13-14). The "trembling" is our recognition of our own feeble weakness in all of these pursuits. That is a healthy recognition that we don't possess the power within us to produce the good fruit, BUT it is Christ in me and working through me that brings this about.

Obedience and submission to a God whom we revere and respect is our "reasonable service" (Romans 12:1-2) We "work out our salvation" by going to God's Word and "renewing our hearts and mind" (Romans 12:1-2), and we come into His presence with a spirit of reverence and awe.

Verses 14-16 Paul tells us again what this unity, this working out all looks out. He says that our days together should be done without complaining and having disputes with one another. We should stand out and not be open to criticism in the middle of a "crooked and perverse" generation. If there ever was a chance to stand out and look different it is right now. Paul says if they can do that then his work will not have been in vain.

Verses 17-18 Paul speaks of being poured out like an offering. This is an echo of his instruction in Romans 12:1-2 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*[1]

Church, this is the heart of Christian obedience. It is the essence of Christian living. This is our "reasonable service".

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[1] *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 12:1–2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Verses 19-24 Paul commends Timothy. He basically is describing Timothy as a person who is not self-centered, but who is always pursuing godly pursuits…pursuing Christ.

Verses 25-30 Paul mentions this person Epaphroditus. Notice he calls him a brother, a fellow worker, and a soldier who was a real messenger who ministered to Paul's need. Apparently, the Philippian church had sent a guy named Epaphroditus who was a real help to Paul. He must have fallen sick there in Rome and Paul was letting them know that he had recovered and he was sending him on back to them.

Paul tells them to hold people like Ephaphroditus in high esteem because of the work they do for Christ, and how they are not self-centered (regarding their own lives) but they they just do what needs to be done. We as believers are to be persons who "get it done". When we become self-absorbed and self-centered on our own situations, we don't leave any time, talent, and treasure for loving others.

> Interestingly, Epaphroditus's name is of pagan origin. It means "belonging to Aphrodite"—the name of the goddess is actually incorporated into the name Epaphroditus. Such is the power of the gospel that a man is set free from dead paganism to serve the living God. When Epaphroditus received the gospel, he was "belonging to Jesus," and the idol had no more claim on him, regardless of his name. The new birth trumped the birth name.
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> When a man like Epaphroditus gives of himself for the sake of God's kingdom, many people benefit. Such a man is worthy of honor, and his presence is cause for rejoicing (Philippians 2:29).[2]

[2] https://www.gotquestions.org/Epaphroditus-in-the-Bible.html